

**REMARKS**

At the outset, the Examiner is thanked for the thorough review and consideration of the pending application. The Office Action dated December 13, 2006 has been received and its contents carefully reviewed.

Initially, applicants wish to thank the Examiner for the indication of allowability of claims 2, 4-9, 11, 13-16, 19-24 and 27-30 if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claims 2-4, 11-13, 19, 22 and 27 are hereby amended; and claims 1, 10, 17, 18, 25 and 26 are hereby canceled. Accordingly, claims 2-9, 11-16, 19-24 and 27-30 are currently pending. Reexamination and reconsideration of the pending claims is respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, claims 1, 3, 10 and 12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,239,790 to Martinelli et al. (hereinafter "Martinelli") taken with U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0063073 to Geaghan et al. (hereinafter "Geaghan"). Claim 17 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0113779 to Itoh et al. (hereinafter "Itoh") taken with Martinelli and Geaghan. Claim 18 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Itoh taken with Martinelli in view of Geaghan and further in view of JP 2002278699 to Shimizu (hereinafter "Shimizu"). Claim 25 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Itoh taken with Martinelli and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,854,450 to Kent (hereinafter "Kent"). Claim 26 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Itoh taken with Martinelli in view of Kent and further in view of Shimizu.

Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections of claims 1, 10, 17, 18, 25 and 26 are moot, and the rejections of claims 3 and 12 are respectfully traversed in light of the amendments to these claims.


Applicants believe the foregoing amendments place the application in condition for allowance and early, favorable action is respectfully solicited.

If for any reason the Examiner finds the application other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to call the undersigned attorney at (202) 496-7500 to discuss the steps necessary for placing the application in condition for allowance. All correspondence should continue to be sent to the below-listed address.

If these papers are not considered timely filed by the Patent and Trademark Office, then a petition is hereby made under 37 C.F.R. §1.136, and any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 for any necessary extension of time, or any other fees required to complete the filing of this response, may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-0911. Please credit any overpayment to deposit Account No. 50-0911. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.

Dated: March 13, 2007

Respectfully submitted,

By 

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